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# The impact of the Santa Cruz massacre on Jakarta

The Santa Cruz killings and its aftermath has had a profound influence on Indonesian politics. Whereas previously, East Timor was never listed as a top priority on the political agenda, it has now become a central issue. The regime in Jakarta is not the same anymore, a period of drastic changes can be seen after the 12th of November.

The government in Jakarta did not expect such an international outcry over Santa Cruz. there have been so many massacres since Suharto came to power _ Aceh in 1990 and still going on, Lampung in 1989, Tanjung Priok in 1984, the death-squads in 1983-84 and the mass killings in 1965-66. But the world community looked the other way. This time it was different. The presence of foreign journalists and the piercing video images of the killing fields in Santa Cruz shocked a large audience in all corners of the world.

Five days after Santa Cruz, Suharto set out on a 26-day trip to two continents, giving the impression that he was unruffled by the storm and confident of his position. But the spectre of Santa Cruz haunted him everywhere. Everywhere he went, in Caracas, Harare and Dakar, probing questions were asked by his hosts and by the press. Foreign Minister Ali Alatas had to spend most of his time explaining Indonesia's position on East Timor to the international press.

The world tour, coming so soon after Suharto had won the presidency of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) had been staged to enhance Suharto's stature as a leader of the South, but it turned into a failure. The President was forced onto the defensive in country after country, taking up valuable time giving his version to head of states. The international outcry on the Santa Cruz was unprecedented. Indonesia's international image was really tarnished and the pressure on Jakarta came from all directions. The tiny island of East Timor has always been Indonesia's major headache and is now increasingly becoming the Angola of Indonesia. Suharto's world tour was meant as paving the way for the next NAM conference in September in Jakarta. Suharto is forced to turn to other directions if he wants to succeed as NAM chairperson.

## Damage limitation

Two important meetings were convened immediately after Suharto's return. The first was with the *KPN*, the National Inquiry Commission, to sort out the thrust of its conclusions. The second was his meeting with the top brass. This was attended by Vice-President ret'd General Moerdiono, Minister of Defence ret'd General Benny Murdani, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, Minister for Home Affairs ret'd General Rudini, ABRI (the Indonesian Armed Forces) Commander General Try Sutrisno, army chief-of-staff General Edi Sudradjat and Attorney-General Singgih. Reports describe the atmosphere at the two-hour meeting as being tense. The outcome was indeed sensational. For the first time in 26 years, Suharto used his position as *Pangti °Panglima Tertinggi,* Supreme Commander§ and issued a number of strict orders, most of them directed at ABRI, the armed forces. First was the replacement of the two army commanders responsible for the region: Major-General Sintong Panjaitan, commander of the Udayana military command, and Brigadier-General Rudy Warouw, commander of the Dili Command. General Try Sutrisno was instructed to conduct another investigation and find the missing bodies. In Moerdiono's words: "As we all know there is still a discrepancy about the dead and the wounded which needs clarification" °*Tempo*, 4 Jan. 1992§.

General Edi Sudradjat was told to set up an Honorary Military Council to examine what went wrong with military procedures in Dili on 12 November. As

with the *KPN*, this body is unprecedented for the Suharto government; never before has the army been required to scrutinise the workings of a military operation.

It is quite clear that President Suharto was determined to implement certain measures as proof to the outside world that he means business. On one hand showing that he is in full control, asserting his authority over the armed forces and on the other hand trying to show to the outside world that the Santa Cruz bloodbath was a mere incident which will not happen again. The president was genuinely upset with the way the East Timor matter had been handled by his ministers during his absence. In particular, General Try Sutrisno's, always regarded as one of Suharto's golden boys, became the target of Suharto's anger. General Sutrisno's blustering language had tarnished Indonesia's battered image, exacerbating the damage inflicted the horrors which had flashed across television screens. Suharto was facing quite a gigantic task, first to prove to the outside world that his government is genuinely trying to improve the human rights situation in East Timor and secondly on the domestic front trying to come to terms with the leadership of ABRI and the growing criticism of the Indonesian public.

Thwarting international criticism

President Suharto had to face different dilemma's. The first problem was how to convince the international community that Jakarta was making serious efforts to improve the human rights conditions in East Timor. The *KPN* report was the first attempt to impress the outside world, but international human rights bodies made scathing remarks about this national inquiry. The demand for an independent international inquiry remained strong, even after the publication of the *KPN* report. Suharto went a few steps further and, as explained earlier, created another team of investigation called *DKM* , the Honorary Military Council. This council did their their work both in East Timor and Jakarta for six weeks and came to earth-shattering conclusions. Six officers will receive a punishment: 3 of them will be suspended from active military duty, 2 others, although still in active duty, will not be placed in any structural position of the army. The only one who remained relatively unruffled is Major-General Sintong Panjaitan who will be sent abroad (Harvard University) for further studies. Sintong Panjaitan, carries the fame of a national hero and could not possibly be sacrified as the other five. On 1 October 1965 as a young officer, he was in command of a platoon to take over the RRI National Radio Station from rebellious units. A few hours later Suharto, the future president, made an announcement that the situation was under control of the army. Some officers can be sacrified but a national hero like General Sintong would go too far for the pride of the nation.

The conclusions of the *DKM* also mention that 8 members of the army will be court-martialled, again quite an exceptional feat. All this made quite a good impression, in particular at the international front. Domestically the *KPN* and *DKM* report created a rift between Suharto and the military. In paricular iddle-ranking officers felt that the military were being used as scapegoat against the growing criticism from abroad. For a period Suharto was facing a kind of Catch 22 situation: making one decision will have drastic repercussions on other fronts and vice versa. The very first months Suharto gave in to international criticism: made his excuses to the familiies of the victims of Santa Cruz, ordered a series of measures like the national inquiry and the punishing of some officers. Only at the end of March, after months of giving in, the Suharto government went into a counter-offensive.

The economic dependency

Economists describe Indonesia at present as a country full of prospects but at present a bit off track. After the steaming second half of the eighties, the

economy got overheated and is now feeling the effects of the global recession. the problems are piling up. Oil prices are sagging, Indonesia's trade balance is unfavourable and last but not least the budget deficit is worsening. The economic sanctions of Canada, Denmark and Holland could not come in a worse moment. Although relatively small, Indonesia is in no position to lose foreign aid. In the last five years foreign aid has accounted for 20% of state revenue and any fall in foreign assistance would make things far worse. Moreover Indonesia's coost of debt servicing is likely to increase to 15.90 trillion rupiah (US $7.95 billion), almost 11% up on this year, although the overall debt servicing ratio (repayment of foreign debt as a percentage of export earnings) will fall slightly from 33.7% to 31.8%. Suharto had to cut short his round the world visit to deal with this urgent matter of readjusting the annual budget. The annual budget for this year shows an austere program: curtailing government spending (by freezing civil-service salaries and reducing petroleum subsidies) and a tougher and more elaborate tax policy. Dependency on foreign aid was decreased and from this fact alone it could be forecasted that Suharto was preparing for a surprise.

**The linkage of human rights and development aid**

One of the disturbing elements for governments with bad human rights records is the increasing consensus in the world that human rights preformance in a country should be one of the main criteria of giving development aid. In particular European countries have been on the forefront of this development and the statement of the European Community in November 1991 is precisely dealing with this matter. This consensus has not yet achieved much in Southeast Asia - on the contrary - the ASEAN bloc insist otherwise, the two should not be linked. Suharto was very disturbed when abovementioned countries decided to apply this principle in practice. Most disturbing was the fact that Holland, at the same chair of the IGGI, the aid consortium for Indonesia, was among the three. Soon after arrival from his trip the president made a strong statement that Indonesia will not accept conditional aid. For Suharto there was no other way but to strike back and he did that on 25 March.

**Disbanding IGGI and breaking aid-relations with Holland**

On that day Jakarta announced to stop accepting aid from the Netherlands. On hindsight it was clear that Suharto has been preparing this move for quite some time and was waiting for the right time to announce this step. The UN Human Rights Commission held its session in February, Amos Wako, the special evoy of the UN Secretary-General has visited East Timor and the international pressure was declining. This moment was seized by Suharto to announce the break with Holland as a start of his international counter-offensive.
The announcement contais many elements, but the major considerations are as follows:

It was clear from the beginning that President was quite upset by the linkage of human rights and development aid. On top of this, the Dutch ODA Minister Jan Pronk and concurrently the chair of IGGI, implemented economic sanctions on Indonesia. Suharto clearly wanted to punish these efforts and choose the Netherlands as obvious scapegoat.

As chair of the Non-aligned Movement, Suharto did a masterstroke by 'punishing' a western power. The stark problem of financial debt of the South towards the rich North has been used in a cunning way by Suharto. Several Third World Countries have already responded positively and praising Suharto's measure as a position of defiance against the North.

Domestically Suharto has given a gesture towards the military, showing that they are not the only scapegoat. It should be said that the trials in Dili and Jakarta against innocent young Timorese is also a gesture of creating an equilibrium among the different parties (in this case: if military are to be court martialled then East Timorese also). Moreover criticism on the economic (monopolistic) activities of his family is inncreasingly becoming a threat for his reign. By switching into an international issue, he hopes to switch the issue into a different direction.

For the moment Suharto has again proven his skills as politician. He has gained time and prestige. On longer term his deed to break the aid-relations with Holland will prove to be counter-productive. Both on domestic and international level. Linking aid with human rights will increasingly become the internationally aceepted criteria. Making mockery of this the way Suharto does will hurt him in medium term. Indonesia's dependency on aid makes the country very vulnerable. In particular if it rejects aid in such a manner. Although the Netherlands is a small country, it is part of many formal and informal alliances. The Indonesian government can expect a backlash in the future.

Domestically, a lot has changed too. From a deliberately ignored political issue, East Timor has become the major talking-point in daily politics. Throughout the whole spectrum everything has moved. The uninformed masses of Indonesia have read about the existing problems in East Timor. The press has extensively reported about events in East Timor, from the Santa Cruz incident till the visit of Lusitania Expresso, from the trials of Timorese students till the break with Holland. Public awareness has grown enormously. The East Timor issue has also exacerbated the conflict between Suharto and the military. The political situation in Indonesia has become more fluid and the time for drastic changes is getting closer.

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